# Home – School Communication Policy

## Introduction

The purpose of this statement is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff in the Central Remedial Clinic school. It is generally accepted that good communication between all of those involved in the school i.e. teachers , special needs assistants (SNAs), children parents/guardians and ancillary staff is a vital part of our school.

## Rationale

Parents are recognised as the primary educators of their children and the home is central to the development of the child. Teachers are recognised as professionals in education and work in partnership with parents. The school and the family strive to be mutually supportive of each other so that the child’s education can be effective. Positive communication between school staff and parents is imperative to the smooth running of an efficient school and is in the best interests of the children’s education, care and well-being while in school. Members of the B.O.M., teaching staff, SNAs and ancillary staff strive to create an open and welcoming atmosphere where good communications are fostered and developed.

This policy evolved after consultation with school staff, the school B.O.M., and parents. It deals with communication within the school and between the school and our partners.

To ensure inclusivity and co-operation, this policy emphasises maintaining and improving the current channels of communication among the users of the school and with the partners in education.

## School Ethos

Central Remedial Clinic School provides an atmosphere and environment in which each pupil develops educationally, socially, physically, emotionally and spiritually to the maximum of his or her potential. We are flexible when planning for and meeting the individual needs of each child. We recognise the variety of ways our pupils communicate and strive to offer each pupil independent methods of communication.

The family and home are central to the social and intellectual development of the child and the nurturing of good and moral values. The school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other in relation to communication, to improve all children’s educational experience.

## Aim of Communication Policy

* To build a school community that is supportive of pupils, staff and all members of the school community who serve the school.
* To establish procedures for the sharing of information in relation to pupil progress, needs and attainment.
* To enrich and optimise the educational opportunities provided for our pupils by accessing the skills and talents of all of the school community.
* To promote a culture of partnership in the education of our pupils.
* To promote and support sound communication structures in the following areas:

1. Staff Communications
2. Communication with parents/guardians
3. Communication within the wider school community

* To outline the school’s regard for the integrity of pupil’s welfare regarding confidentiality

All members of the school community are expected to familiarise themselves with the Communication Policy. It is considered that everyone has a responsibility to make themselves aware of where and how to seek information and updates as the need arises and should seek to keep themselves informed.

## Overall approach to effective communication

* All parties will be communicated with through a variety of agreed channels of communication.
* There will be opportunity for feedback to check that information is being received and understood.
* The CRC School recognises that some families may not use English as a first language. The school will, where possible use all efforts to ensure translation of school messages.

**There are a number of structures in place to facilitate good communication links between parents and school:**

* Currently Seesaw is used as a whole school daily communication method by all classes to communicate with families
* Meeting for parents of incoming Preschool pupils
* Meeting for parents of other incoming pupils
* IEP meeting in the first term
* Parent/teacher meetings in the third term
* Parents receive a school report of each pupil at the end of each school year
* Telephone
* Written communications
* letters
* newsletters
* Other online communications
* email
* Aladdin
* text-a-parent
* Regular bulletins keep parents up to date with school events, holidays and school concerns
* End of term newsletters focusing on school events
* Parents are invited to school events and concerts
* Involvement of parents in preparation for First Holy Communion and Confirmation as appropriate
* Informal parent/ teacher meetings
* School website
* Board of Management Parent nominees

It is important that the school is informed if family events/ situations occur that cause anxiety to your child and therefore may adversely affect his/ her education.

In all matters pertaining to the well-being and education of pupils, only the parents/ legal guardians named on the enrolment form will be consulted by the teachers.

## Parent – Teacher meetings

Formal Parent – Teacher meetings are held outside of school hours in the third term. A letter is issued to each pupil, giving date and time of the meetings. Parents are requested to return the attached form indicating their attendance. If custody of a pupil is shared, requests can be made by both parents to meet their child’s teacher individually for Parent – Teacher meetings. If the time is unsuitable, requests can be made to find a more suitable time.

The aims of Parent/ Teacher meetings are:

* To let parents know how their children are progressing in school
* To inform teachers on how children are coping outside school
* To establish an ongoing relationship and communication with parents
* To help teacher/ parents get to know the children better as individuals
* To help children realise that home and school are working together.

A teacher or a parent may request a Parent/ Teacher meeting at any time for reason of teaching, learning or behaviour management issues. Every effort will be made to arrange a meeting at the earliest possible opportunity.

## IEP Meetings

Each pupil of the Central Remedial Clinic School is entitled to an Individual Educational Plan devised by the Class teacher in consultation with Parents and the pupil’s multi-disciplinary team.

Formal timetabled IEP meetings on the subject of the Individual Educational Plan will take place in October/ November. If a parent is unable to attend their allocated date and time, all efforts will be made to facilitate another meeting time.

In addition to Parents and the Class teacher, these meetings may also be attended by members of the pupil’s Multi-disciplinary team.

A review will take place during May / June. However, if a parent wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child’s IEP; they may do so by prior appointment

## Informal Parent/ Teacher meetings

Communication between parents and teachers is to be encouraged.

Arranging parent/ teacher meetings within the school day while children are in school is difficult. Parents, however, are welcome to speak to the principal or teacher at an agreed appointment time.

Meetings with the class teacher at the class door to discuss a child’s concern/ progress is discouraged on the following grounds:

* A teacher cannot adequately supervise his/ her class while at the same time speaking to a parent
* It is difficult to be discreet when so many other adults and pupils are close by
* It can be embarrassing for the pupil when his/ her parent is talking to the teacher at the classroom door.

It is understood, however, that occasions occur where a parent needs to speak to a teacher urgently. Sometimes these meetings need to take place without prior notice. The principal will try to facilitate such meetings making every effort to ensure that the children in the class do not lose out on any teaching and learning time.

If parents wish to drop in equipment, devices etc, this can be done through the secretary’s office.

If parents are collecting their child for an appointment, they must go the secretary’s office. Please give the teacher notice of appointments so that the pupil can be appropriately prepared for leaving the classroom e.g. correct seating, device charged, visual schedule.

It is important to keep classroom disruptions to a minimum.

## Rights and responsibilities

**Parents have the right to:**

* Expect that their child will be safe in school
* Be treated with courtesy and respect
* Have access to information about their child’s performance and the educational programmes and opportunities available to their children
* Be actively involved in the education of their children
* Have access to a complaints and appeals procedure

**Parents are responsible for:**

* Providing the school with two up-to-date phone numbers and be contactable at all times.
* Sending their child to school ready to learn
* Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and arrive on time
* Supervising homework and ensuring it is completed
* Being aware of their child’s work and progress
* Keeping in touch with their child’s teacher and principal
* Responding to communications from the school
* Attending school meetings and events
* Reinforcing and supporting the school Code of Behaviour
* Complying with school policies
* Working in partnership with the school on matters relating to their child’s school life.

**School staff have the right to:**

* Be treated with courtesy and respect
* A private existence in their community
* Due process and fairness in relation to any complaints from parents/ guardians

Teachers and Principal are responsible for:

* Acting in loco parentis in the education and care of pupils
* Ensuring the safety of the pupils in their care
* Treating each pupil with respect and dignity
* Complying with official school policies
* Using appropriate teaching methods, allowing for differentiation depending on pupil needs and abilities
* Evaluating and recording children’s learning at regular intervals
* Reporting children’s progress to parents at regular intervals
* Promoting communication with parents and the community
* Promoting partnership within the whole school community

**Parents are encouraged to:**

* Develop close links with the school
* Participate in meetings in a positive, respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the staff and all staff members of the school
* Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children.
* Share the responsibility of seeing that the school remains true to its ethos values and distinctive character.
* Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them where appropriate.
* Follow the agreed complaints procedure when an issue arises within the school

## Complaints Procedure

Complaints are infrequent, but the school would wish that these would be dealt with informally, fairly and quickly. The following is the agreed complaints procedure to be followed in the CRC School:

**Stage 1-Informal stage**

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, firstly approach the **class staff** with a view to resolving the complaint
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class staff he/she should approach the **Principal** with a view to resolving it
3. If the complaint is still unresolved, the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the **Chairperson** of the Board of Management with a view to resolving it.

**Stage 2-Formal stage**

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further, he/she should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management
2. The Chairperson will bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the staff and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

**Stage 3**

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the authorisation of the Board:
   1. Supply the staff with a copy of the written complaint and
   2. Arrange a meeting with the staff, and where applicable, the Principal with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint.

**Stage 4**

1. If the complaint is still not resolved, the Chairperson should make a formal report to the board within 10 days of the meeting
2. If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated, the staff and the complainant should be so informed within 3 days of the Board meeting
3. If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation, the following steps should be followed:
4. The staff should be supplied with copies of any written evidence in support of the complaint
5. He/she should be requested to supply a written response to the complaint to the Board and should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation to the Board and to be accompanied by another person to that meeting
6. The Board may arrange a meeting with the complainant, who may be accompanied by another person to this meeting.

**Stage 5**

Following the Boards investigations, the Chairperson shall convey the decision of the Board in writing to the staff and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the Board. The decision of the Board shall be final.

## Behaviour of all Stakeholders in the School

Positive and respectful communication is of high importance to our school. This not only extends to the children but to all of the stakeholders e.g. the staff, parents and the wider community.  Anyone entering our building should feel safe to do so. While the behaviour of children in our school is of vital importance, adults in the school community also have a responsibility to ensure their own behaviour models the types of behaviour expected of children.

It is important that all stakeholders are responsible for their own behaviours in the school.  Examples include:

* All stakeholders are expected to speak to each other with respect.  Shouting or other aggressive tones are not acceptable.  If a stakeholder displays anger or aggression to another member of the school community, they may be asked to remove themselves from the building.  In certain cases, the Gardaí must be called
* All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises
* Staff should not be asked to speak about another parent’s child. The staff of the school will respect your child’s right to privacy so it is asked that parents respect other children’s rights to privacy
* When stakeholders meet, it is important to respect that the time of meetings should be kept to a reasonable amount of time.  Times of meetings should be agreed beforehand and these should be respected
* Staffs are generally available to listen to a quick issue in the morning and after school in person or over the phone.  However, should a parent need to have a discussion or meeting, an appointment should be made at a convenient time for both parties. This ensures that issues can be resolved.  Classes begin at 8:50am and finish at 2.30pm and this time should not be interrupted.
* all stakeholders are expected to be respectful of fellow stakeholders and no person’s name or photograph associated with the school should be posted to a social media site without prior consent e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to the limited use of information about the Central Remedial Clinic School pupils, parents and staff which may be obtained by staff during the course of their work. Confidentiality pertaining to all school matters is of paramount importance to all those who work or visit our school, and especially those who are in contact with staff and pupils. For staff, this is explicitly stated in their contract of employment as well as the school’s Child Protection Policy.

N.B. “School Staff” refers to ALL staff in the Central Remedial Clinic School including teachers, SNAs, Secretaries, caretaker, bus escorts, substitute staff and students on placement.

1. Sharing of any information should be done only on a need to know basis and only when it is in the best interest of the pupil or staff member concerned.
2. When meeting with parents, only information relating to their own child should be discussed. Staff should decline to enter into any conversation relating to other pupils in the school. The staff of the CRC School will respect each child’s right to privacy, so it is asked that all parents respect other children’s right to privacy.
3. Individual school staff members may be closer to some parents as they may themselves be from the same community or may be parents in the same school as a pupil’s siblings. Some parents may therefore consider these members of staff more approachable than other members of staff. It is important that all school staff members recognise the rules of confidentiality which govern their role as a member of the school staff. No discussion of any pupil, staff member, class or event pertaining to the school should take place without consolation and agreement with the principal and the relevant parties.
4. Pupil / school business should not be discussed outside school hours during social occasions by any member of staff.
5. School business should not be discussed on transport vehicles, in areas of the school environment or in the CRC where non staff members may be in a position to hear.
6. It is particularly important not to identify any student by full name outside of the school building / premises.
7. Discussion of pupil / school business is strictly forbidden on social networking sites. Engagement in discussion about any social networking sites with current pupils in the Central Remedial Clinic School should be discouraged and distraction strategies should be used.
8. Care must be taken when commenting on a pupil’s actions or behaviours, personal or family circumstances during conversations in the staff room. Only positive affirming comments may be made in the presence of others.
9. Students on placement can be made aware of Individual Care / Behaviour Management Plans where relevant and at the discretion of the teacher.
10. Meetings involving confidential details in relation to school or pupil / family business should not take place in a public area where discussion can be overheard.
11. Family and Staff preference for privacy should be respected at all times. Individual families and staff members should always be consulted before any photos, videos, etc. are permitted to be used in the media or in any public arena e.g. newspapers, TV., websites, etc. A distinction should be made if material is to be used for professional training. Specific permission forms relating to pupils are circulated to parents in this instance.
12. Displaying of photos of pupils and their work is commonly practised throughout the school. Photograph displays with pupils’ first names should always portray pupils in the best positive light.
13. Parents should only receive photos of their own child. In some instances (i.e. School leavers collage) photos of other pupils are included. In this event permission to circulate their photos should be received from the parents of the other pupils.
14. Contact details of any family or staff member should not be circulated to anyone without their consent. Names, address and phone numbers should not be on public display in the school or in individual classrooms.
15. Any information, written or recorded relating to a pupil is regarded as private and confidential and is only available to specific / relevant members of the school team and family. Such information can be released with recorded consent of parents.
16. Private and sensitive information relating to a pupil and his / her family which comes to staff attention should only be discussed with the School Principal, Deputy Principal or the most senior teacher present in the school and should not be shared publicly.
17. Behaviour records for individual pupils should not be publicly displayed in classrooms and should be identified by pupils initials rather than full names.

A **‘Declaration of Confidentiality’** (Appendix 1) must be completed and signed by all those who work / volunteer within the school, indicating that they clearly understand and are willing to abide by the guidelines governing this policy. This includes teachers, SNAs, bus escorts, secretaries, caretakers and volunteers. This is not an exhaustive list.

The principal and school secretaries are responsible for ensuring that the Declaration of Confidentiality is signed by the individuals and stored appropriately.

## Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act became operative on 1 November 1989. It is an important piece of legislation for BOMs and for those who work in schools, as schools and colleges were brought under the scope of safety legislation for the first time.

It is recognised that school staff may be at risk from violence in the form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults or other forms of intimidation. This behaviour may come from pupils, parents, guardians, other staff members or intruders.

In this respect, all staff should be aware of **DES Circular 40/97** which deals with the procedures to follow if they feel they have been subjected to any of the above behaviours. A copy of this circular can be found in the school’s Health and Safety folder.

## Criteria for success

Our Home – School Communication Policy will be seen to be working well when:

* we receive positive feedback from parents
* we receive positive feedback from staff
* when there is good communication between staff, parents and the whole school community
* when staff and parents have access to these clear communication procedures
* all members of the school community have regard for the integrity of pupils’ welfare regarding confidentiality
* visitors, volunteers, student teachers, students SNAs and others who engage in work/work experience in the school are aware of their role in ensuring confidentiality for the school community
* parents and other staff members feel assured and confident that those who engage in work/work experience in the school are unambiguously bound by the strict guidelines and have due respect for your child’s privacy.
* Seesaw analysis:
* class by class of the level of use by teacher communicating to parent and parent communicating to teacher
* Use of messaging
* Voice note interaction
* Uploading photographs
* Uploading video clips
* Aladdin analysis:
* Texts being received by parents
* Texts being read by parents
* Email received by parents
* Email read by parents

## Ratification and Review

This policy was ratified by the BOM on 26th April 2021

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: 26th April 2021

Chairperson, Board of Management

This policy will be reviewed : April 2023

Appendix 1

# Declaration of Confidentiality

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ have read the above Confidentiality section in relation to the Central Remedial Clinic School and agree to abide by it.

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ do hereby agree to keep confidential all matters arising during my time within the Central Remedial Clinic School.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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CRC School Principal

Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken by the Board of Management. Please ensure that any breach of confidentiality is reported to the School Principal / Deputy Principal.